

TLRP/3
22nd January 2001

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RESEARCH CAPACITY INITIATIVE in TEACHING AND LEARNING

A £500,000 investment in improving research capacity for evidence-based practice in teaching and learning is announced today (22nd January). This will be managed by a Network based at the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, as part of the £12.5 m. ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme.

Over the next three years a team led by Dr Stephen Gorard will collaborate with other researchers in the Programme and the wider teaching and learning community to develop and share best practice. The Network will start by carrying out an audit of existing UK research skills and needs. From this they will work in partnership with researchers to create a programme of training and support for quantitative and other research techniques.

The Programme Director, Professor Charles Desforges, said: "I welcome the appointment of Dr. Gorard and his colleagues. This Network will be a powerful means of supporting both the current and the next generation of researchers. It is central to our plans for improving UK capacity for research-based practice in teaching and learning."

Dr Gorard said: "We are looking forward to forming partnerships with the research community to support their professional development. We aim to be a catalyst for sharing skills and experience between research teams and will provide or arrange specific training for identified needs."

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/ Notes for Editors

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(a) Background on the Programme

The ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme has been commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council with funding of £12.5 m. from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly and the Department for Education and Employment. Building research capacity is one of the four key objectives of the Programme, which includes 14 major research projects (ranging from literacy in primary schools to professional training) and other related activities. Details can be found on the Website at <http://www.ex.ac.uk/ESRC-TLRP/>

The Programme features partnership between researchers and practitioners in contributing to and using research, and fosters collaborative work between disciplines and across sectors. Teachers, trainers and other users have a strong voice in ensuring that the research is relevant and accessible, so their peers can use its findings to make significant advances in the achievement of learners.

(b) The Research Capacity Building Initiative

In 1999 the Programme commissioned a review of UK research capacity in the teaching and learning field. This concluded that expertise in this field was unevenly distributed. In particular, it identified a need to develop and spread best practice in quantitative and other research techniques.

In March 2000 the Programme therefore published a call for proposals for the co-ordination of research capacity building activities (the text is available on the Programme website as above). Following a peer-reviewed shortlisting process the successful proposal was selected by the Programme's Steering Committee of researchers, practitioners and research managers.

(c) The Teaching and Learning Research Capability Building Network

The Network team will be built from the 100 or so researchers at the newly-formed Cardiff University School of Social Sciences. The School includes research expertise in all methods of investigation, and research groups in Education, Work-based training, Health and Medicine, Psychology, Sociology, Labour Markets, Science and Knowledge, Criminology, and Social Policy. The Executive group consists of two researchers (to be appointed) and:

Dr Stephen Gorard – large-scale data analysis, combining methodological approaches, teaching and learning via ICT.

Dr Laurence Moore – health education, multi-level modelling, cluster randomised controlled trials.

Professor Ken Prandy – statistical modelling, use of secondary data.

Professor Gareth Rees – workplace learning, theory building, combining methodological approaches.

Professor John Furlong – teaching and learning in classroom interaction, new models of transforming research findings.

Dr Ray Crozier – cognitive psychology, laboratory experiments, barriers to learning.

(d) The Economic and Social Research Council

The ESRC is the UK's largest funding agency for research and postgraduate training relating to social and economic issues. It has a track record of providing high-quality, relevant research to business, the public sector and government. The ESRC invests around £46 million every year in social science research. At any time, its range of funding schemes may be supporting 2,000 researchers within academic institutions and research policy institutes. It also funds postgraduate training within the social sciences, thereby nurturing the researchers of tomorrow. The ESRC website address is <http://www.esrc.ac.uk>

(e) Contacts

- **Dr Stephen Gorard, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences**
Tel: 02920 875113 E-Mail: Gorard@Cardiff.ac.uk
- **Dr John Kanefsky, Assistant Director, Teaching and Learning Research Programme**
Tel: 01392 264978 E-mail: J.W.Kanefsky@exeter.ac.uk
- **Ms. Lilian El-Doufani, ESRC External Relations**
Tel 01793 413032 Email: lilian.eldoufani@esrc.ac.uk